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Ethics for Missionaries

by

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I. Introduction

1. The Author

I am no expert in ethics and no missionary. I am a church executive, administrator, writer, author. I have no firsthand experience in full time missionary work to Jewish people and am thus not familiar with some of the things directors and missionaries of Jewish evangelism agencies might experience, such as Herbert Links speaks of in his paper "Ethics in Jewish Evangelism" (Dallas, April 10-11, 1985): "the bickering, the pettiness and those things which divide us by the fact that certain things are more important to some leaders of Jewish missions than winning Jews to Christ."

My missionary experience has been in parish ministry in communities where there were no Jewish people, or very few of them that I was aware of. I also served on a college campus of a Lutheran college as chaplain and professor and now I am Director of Evangelism for The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod. I help to develop plans and programs and work with District leaders in all areas of evangelism. My experience in Jewish evangelism has been in providing staff services to a Task Force on Jewish Evangelism which we have appointed. With their counsel and aid, I assist in conducting workshops, writing and editing material and counseling pastors of our congregations. My direct evangelism experience is only in my personal witness to Jewish people whom I meet in a casual way.

With this kind of background I do not have the experience and perhaps am not as qualified as many of you to speak in this area of ethics relating to Jewish evangelism. But I do have one advantage in that I can speak about the ethics that relate to the relationship between Jewish evangelism agencies and the church body and the congregations.

I do have some feel for those things which offend Christian ethics in relationships between churches and missionary agencies, an area which was not referred to at Dallas by either paper, the one by Links and the other by Moishe Rosen, "An Ethical Basis of Witness to the Jewish Community." I have read both of those papers and incorporate some of the concepts of those men in this presentation.

2. The Outline

The outline for this presentation is the statement prepared by the workshop on "Ethics for Missionaries" prepared by participants in that workshop at the Lausanne consultation in England, a group of from 6-10 people each of the three times we met. The Lausanne statement is quoted in each of the sections below, the Scripture is

quoted and then I add further comments. Notice that the title does not include "Jewish." This was intentional so that this statement could more easily be adapted to any missionary or Christian witness by making specific applications to other situations. We will look at the headings and the paragraphs from the statement and then elaborate, make specific application, and pose questions for discussion.

3. Definition

A. Of the five definitions for the word "ethics" in the American College Dictionary, the second one applies to our discussion: "the rules of conduct recognized in respect to a particular class of human actions."

B. Ethics for Missionaries then are suggested principles for guiding the conduct of Missionaries in their relationships with each other, the public, believers and other organizations, both organized congregations, church bodies and individuals.

II. Foundation

For the guidance of all who seek to carry out the great commission to the Jewish people, we list this set of principles. These principles are drawn from the teachings of the Scriptures about the witness of the believer by both his life and his words.

The message we proclaim is that Jesus is the promised Messiah and Savior for all people, that He "died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day" (1 Cor. 15:3-4). As this message is shared with people, God, according to His sovereign will, leads people to repentance and faith and makes them disciples of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:16, 1 Cor. 12:3).

Romans 1:16: "The Gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes; first for the Jew and then for the Gentile."

1 Cor. 12:3: "No one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, 'Jesus be cursed' and no one can say Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit."

1. The Scriptural Base

All the principles or guidelines for Christian conduct must have their basis in Scripture, either drawn directly from the Scripture or be deductions from clear Scripture. Moishe Rosen gives an example of how some draw their principles directly out of Scripture: (Note the underlined words).

1 Thess. 2:3-8: "For our exhortation does not come from error or by way of deceit; but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the Gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who examines our hearts. For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed--God is witness--nor did we

seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority. But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. Having thus a fond affection for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the Gospel of God but also our own lives, because you have become very dear to me."

From that Scripture Moishe draws these 8 points:

- (1) The Gospel should not be preached in such a way as to only please men, but in such a way as to please God.
- (2) Proclamation must not involve flattery.
- (3) The Gospel should not be presented in such a way as to satisfy the greed of the proclaimer.
- (4) The Gospel should not be presented in such a way as to bring glory to the proclaimer.
- (5) Godly proclamation does not always insist on its rights.
- (6) It is gentle.
- (7) It springs from holy affection.
- (8) Its basis is love.

2. The Disciples Witness to Everyone

Paul was an apostle to the Gentiles, but he also witnessed to Jewish people. Peter was an apostle to the Jewish people, but he also witnessed to Gentiles. The disciple of Jesus Christ witnesses to all of his relatives, friends and neighbors. Of course, those who are called to full-time missionary work may be called to witness to a specific group of people. Some groups of people, especially when they are of different cultural, religious and racial background, ought to be approached with special sensitivity in those areas. This may call for special training and different strategies.

3. The Holy Spirit is the Source of Faith

"No man can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:3). The Holy Spirit brings people to faith. He does it through ^{the} Gospel of the death ^{and} resurrection of Jesus Christ which St. Paul says is "the power of God for salvation." The witness proclaims that message and the Holy Spirit works through that message to create and sustain faith (Romans 1:16).

II. Motives

Our motives for evangelization must be right. We speak in obedience to Christ, (Matt. 28:19-20), seeking God's glory, with compassion, sincerity,

love and respect, earnestly and urgently warning of God's judgment, and telling of salvation in Christ. Any ulterior motives in such work are unethical and bring shame on the Name of Christ (1 Cor. 13:1-2).

Matthew 28:18-20: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I will be with you always, to the very end of the age."

1 Cor. 13:1-2: "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging symbol. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing."

1. Ulterior Motives

What are the ulterior motives referred to in the statement? The statement speaks of acceptable Christian motives and any other reasons for being a missionary is an ulterior motive. Some of them might be these:

- a. Support an organization
- b. Satisfy one's ego with honor, power, or success
- c. Compete with other missionary agencies
- d. Financial gain
- e. Personal satisfaction of seeing a life changed.

Do you know people driven by any of these ulterior motives? Probably there is no one in missionary work that is completely controlled by any one of these. The problem is more subtle. The devil corrupts our genuine Christian motives with bits and pieces of some of the ulterior motives. I shared a taxicab from downtown Kansas City to the airport some twenty miles away with a young man who was returning from a convention. He shared with me the kind of work he was in. He worked with blind and deaf children. I tried to imagine the difficulty of this kind of work and asked him some questions. Then I finally asked, "Why do you do it?" He thought a moment and said, "I guess because of the satisfaction I get out of seeing a child make some progress?" Is that an acceptable motive from the perspective of Christian ethics? Why do you serve in the position you do?

2. Hierarchy of Motives

I believe that all of us are motivated by a complex variety of forces. St. Paul spoke of some preachers who were motivated by envy, rivalry or selfish ambition and others sincerely out of love (Philippians 1:18). Paul rejoiced that Christ was preached out of "false motives or true" but he still encouraged the true motive of love.

I think that love is the highest motivation, love for Christ and love for the people for whom he died. The early church grew because individual lay men and women spoke about their faith to others. That was the primary method of expansion. Church historians tell us that their motivation was primarily that of the privilege of knowing Jesus as Lord and sharing that good news with others. There was little said about duty or obedience to command. I think there is a hierarchy of motives such as the list below.

This list is not intended to exclude any motive nor to say that this is the exact order. But I have observed that when Christian ministers or any full-time church worker is motivated primarily by the top three, one finds more joy, fulfillment and satisfaction in the ministry than when the bottom three dominates one's motivations.

- a. Love for Christ
- b. Compassion for people
- c. Privilege of sharing the Gospel
- d. Pity for the souls lost to hell
- e. A sense of duty
- f. Obedience to Christ.

III. Methods

The Gospel should be presented with forthrightness and honesty, giving due weight to both the price and the privileges of being a child of God. We respect the God-given right of all individuals in every culture to freely consider the claims of Christ. Our methods should reflect the highest standard of Scripture, the character of Christ, and the finest efforts of which we are capable (Col. 3:17).

Colossians 3:17: "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

1. An Honest Presentation of the Gospel

An honest presentation of the Gospel does not soften the need for repentance nor hide the commitment to a new life that may bring hardship and does not solve all the problems of life. A testimony that implies "when I came to know Jesus as my Lord and Savior" all my problems were solved, may give the inquirer the impression that Jesus is going to take away all the quarrels and bickering in my home, give me financial stability and success in the competition of the office. This is a theology of glory instead of the more Biblical theology of the cross. It is dishonest to present the Gospel using success and freedom from all problems as a carrot.

2. Allows the Individual Freedom of Choice

Manipulation is using circumstances, an emotional setting, or a style of presentation to pressure the individual to the desired response. A salesman seeks to lead the customer into a series of "yes" answers and thus finally to a "yes" to the sale.

Dr. Edwin Hollatz, Wheaton College, says: "Anything that denies the persuadee his freedom of choice is unethical and is really against the basic integrity that God Himself operates from and has invested in human beings." While the Holy Spirit alone creates faith, He allows each person to reject His work and say "no" to the invitation to believe in Jesus as Savior. We must respect that right and allow the individual the time and emotional freedom to do so without forcing a decision.

3. Children Can Also Believe

For parents who do not fulfill their obligation of religious education the church assumes a greater role. The church, in addition to the parents, has a command from the Lord to "teach them to obey all things." That is why it organizes Christian Day Schools, Sunday Schools, weekday schools, Vacation Bible Schools, and other educational programs. Jesus wants the children to come to Him.

If parents do not bring them, the church can help to bring them. In working with children, the parents should know what it is their children are attending. In the work of Child Evangelism Fellowship, Good News Clubs are conducted in homes after school with games, refreshments and teaching. This can be abused and peer pressure applied to manipulate children, but this approach can be legitimate and helpful when we respect the child's right to decide and make sure the parents know what we are teaching.

Parents send children to Sunday School and Christian Day School for many reasons - a moral education, to avoid public school evils, to get better personal attention, etc. In The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod we encourage schools to have a special series of classes for the parents so that the parents know that we are teaching them what we believe on the basis of the Bible and Luther's catechism. When children are enrolled, it is made clear that the child will have classes in religion and be encouraged to attend Sunday School and church.

4. Working with Congregations

Perhaps here is where we should add a section on working with congregations. I regularly get telephone calls like this (and at our headquarters any such calls are automatically referred to me). The Jews for Jesus group will be in our area and they want to make a presentation. "Is this group alright to bring in? Are there any problems I should be aware of?" I am happy to be able to tell that pastor or lay person that the Jews for Jesus organization understands our basic doctrinal position, respects our position on worship and will not make an issue of points where we might disagree. A brief list of items to consider as ethical concerns when working with a denominational congregation are:

a. Be aware of doctrinal differences and avoid making an issue of them. Such areas include: sacrament or ordinances; the end times; joint worship and close communion.

b. In appeals for funds, respect the regular giving procedures of the local congregation. Some churches use a special "communion offering" while others use a "door offering," and some do not take special collections. A card for gathering names and addresses of interested people seems to be an acceptable approach. Furthermore, pressure to give out of guilt or in the place of tithes and offerings should never be used!

c. Be sensitive in referring new believers to congregations. How should they be selected? What is the relationship after referral?

d. Be careful about criticizing the organized church. The church has many failings, including the lack of personal witness and missionary zeal, but these may be sensitive areas for an outsider to critique. Speak of the church and missionary agencies as partners and ask for ways in which they work together.

IV. Scripture

Both Old and New Testaments attest to the Messiahship of Jesus and should be presented in a manner which takes into consideration the context of the passage and the intent of the author. This should be reflected in our personal witness and evangelistic literature (2 Tim. 2:15).

2 Timothy 2:15: "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth."

1. Sound Principles of Interpretation

- a. Clear, literal, grammatic meaning unless figures or symbols are indicated
- b. Understood in the context of the chapter and book
- c. Understood in terms of the historic setting and intent of the author
- d. Unclear passages are interpreted by clear passages
- e. All Scripture finds fulfillment in Christ.

2. Presented So It Is Understood

Colossians 4:2-4:

- (2) Devote yourself to prayer, being watchful and thankful.
- (3) And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.
- (4) Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.
- (6) Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

V. Identity

We declare the ^{our}privacy of our relationship to Jesus the Messiah. We are new creations in him. The expression of Jewish identity must be consistent with that identification in Christ. Messianic practices and terminology must serve to illumine and enhance this relationship with Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).

2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"

1 Corinthians 2:1: "I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified."

Herbert Links in his paper "Ethics in Jewish Evangelism" lifts up the word "integrity" as key to all of ethics. He quotes Billy Graham, "I hope I will be remembered most as one who walked in integrity." Links says:

When we talk about ethics we are talking about soundness or integrity. That is, when we say we have integrity we mean we are who we represent ourselves as being, doing what we should in the way God would have us do it.

One of the most critical areas of ethics in Jewish evangelism as it concerns outreach to other Jewish people is in the area of terms and symbols. Here are some questions which need to be asked and a few examples to illustrate:

1. Is the term an honest representation?

Rabbi: Jewish understanding includes training at a Jewish Seminary with a type of learning that is given in Jewish tradition and then ordination approved by a Seminary. While the word means teacher, is the word teacher today a "functional equivalent?" How does the Jewish public understand the word when used by believers in Jesus? How do Gentile Christians understand it?

2. Does the term communicate what we want it to?

Messianic Jew: Moishe Rosen quotes a rabbi: "I am a Messianic Jew because I believe that the Messiah will yet come. You are a Messianic Christian because you share their faith, not mine. How can you say that it is Messianic Judaism when you accept those who are uncircumcized? You make a mockery of the term Judaism."

A Christian leader says: "To say that your religion is Messianic Judaism is to tell me that you are something other than Christian, and I can't determine whether you mean more or less."

Similar terms which need evaluating are: Hebrew Christian, Jewish believer, Messianic Synagogue. In a survey of Missouri Synod Lutherans, many did not understand terms like "messianic Jews" or "Messianic congregation." They preferred a term which communicates more precisely like "Jewish Christian," just as we speak of a Chinese Christian, an Arab Christian.

3. Does the term enhance the message of Christ?

Does it help people understand and believe? Does it create a barrier? What terms did Paul use? ("become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some" (1 Cor. 9:22). The focus should be on the fulfillment in Christ, not on the prophecy, the type, or the symbol.

4. Do we clearly say who we are and what we are about?

This involves much of our advertising and raises the question as to whether it is proper to intentionally deceive Jewish people in order to

entice them to come and hear our message. When our congregation in Beverly Hills, California, Mt. Calvary, allowed a Messianic group to use their parish hall they announced their services on the bulletin board as a "Messianic Synagogue" and listed the leader of the group as "Rabbi." There was no indication that this group believed that Jesus was the Messiah. They were criticized by the Jewish community as intentionally seeking to deceive the public.

VI. Opposition

Jesus experienced opposition and said we would be hated for His Name's sake (Luke 21:17). Following His example we are to respond to opposition in a godly manner. We ought not retaliate but respond in love and compassion (2 Tim. 1:7-8). Opposition should cause us to pray fervently for our witness and for those who oppose the Gospel (Luke 6:22-23, Eph. 6:12-18).

Civil authorities which are appointed by God may be used when needed in our service to the Lord (Romans 13:1-5, Acts 16:35-40).

Luke 21:17: "All men will hate you because of me."

2 Timothy 1:7-8: "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the Gospel by the power of God."

Luke 6:22-23: "Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how your fathers treated the prophets."

Ephesians 6:12-18: "Struggle is not with flesh and blood....rulers, authorities, powers of this dark world and spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms....take the whole armor of God...."

Acts 16:35-40: Philippi-authorities beg Paul to leave. Respect his Roman citizenship.

1. Opposition is to be expected

Opposition comes to every Christian witness. If people rejected Jesus, they will reject His followers. If they hated Jesus, they will hate His followers (John 15:18). And every Christian to some degree experiences that kind of rejection by the world in which he lives. Richard Lischer says, "The authentic witness always finds himself slightly out of sync with society, articulating words no one wants to hear, engaging in acts of faithfulness no one understands" (Speaking of Jesus). He calls these the "little martyrdoms" which Christians experience because they are Christians with a lifestyle based on different values and standards which includes telling others why it is different.

This experience of opposition is accentuated when we witness to Jewish people who have often been taught to reject the name of Jesus. So Moishe Rosen says: "No matter how ethically we behave, our fellow Jews will continue to complain about our ethics."

2. Avoid giving justification for opposition

While we expect opposition, and know that it will come, we should not be guilty of provoking it nor give just cause for overt opposition. We don't have to raise sensitive issues when there is nothing to be gained by starting an argument. We don't have to demand our rights for the sake of our rights. Paul gives us the example of becoming a "slave to everyone" even though "I am free and belong to no man." "To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win as many as possible. To those under the law I became like one under the law. . . . To those not having the law I became like one not having the law. . . . To the weak I became weak. . . . I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some" (1 Cor. 9:19-22).

Conclusion

Ethical witness is telling others about Jesus Christ in a winsome way so that the hearer understands and is free to believe in Him and follow Him as Savior and Lord. The witness is given by a disciple of Jesus Christ who authenticates the message of God's love in Jesus Christ by his own love and desire to imitate Him.

An unethical witness is a statement or action by a Christian which misrepresents Jesus Christ and causes a false impression in the mind of the hearer.

Peter speaks about the trials and suffering that comes to Christians as a way in which we "participate in the sufferings of Christ," and for that we should rejoice (1 Peter 4:12-13). He adds, "If you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name" (1 Peter 4:16). We are Christians - little Christs. Let us be proud of it. The Name is an offense to some. It is a stumbling block and always will be but we follow that name and put our faith in it. May that Name guide our conduct and practices as disciples who witness to Him to the world, to Jew and Gentile alike.

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*DISCUSSION ON THE ABOVE

Abraham Sandler pointed out that he came from a religious home. But then he worked for Christian and Missionary Alliance, which are the two worst words to use in Jewish evangelism. So some building and explaining are required before we can really use these terms. He pointed out further that because terms like "Christ" or "Christian" or "church" have negative responses in the Jewish mind, a miscommunication could result with their usage. Erwin Kolb asked if it is still true that the younger generation of Jews still take the terms "Christ" and "Jesus" to be associated with past horrors. Arnold Fruchtenbaum answered that this was still true with the younger generation. Milt Maiman responded that he came to the conclusion that when we use "Messianic Jews," we are putting ourselves in a Jewish context. The church has a responsibility to understand where Messianic Jews are coming from. Erwin Kolb agreed. For instance, he said, they do a series of Bible studies on the feasts, such as Passover. The church must understand the Jewish believer. Alan Gilman added that what we need is maturity. As we grow in the Lord, it should not matter what someone calls you. So if a Gentile asks the Jewish believer if he is a Christian, he would certainly say yes, though he would not respond the same way if he were speaking to a Lubavitcher. While he prefers the term "congregation," when talking to Christians he doesn't mind using the term "church." Terms are very important because they help us communicate the message, and to help people look at the message in a different way. Arnold Fruchtenbaum pointed out that anytime a Jewish mission, a Jewish congregation, or a Jewish believer does anything Jewish in any way, he will be called deceptive by the opposition. Therefore, such cries from the Jewish community should not intimidate us. It should be stated clearly that we still affirm our Jewishness, and therefore have as much right to these terms as anyone else. Moishe Rosen added that the term "Messianic Jew" does have validity. Even Gentile Christians within Christendom have found it necessary to modify the term "Christian," and to use such terms as "believer" or "born again." There is general recognition even among Gentile believers that the term "Christian" just doesn't communicate anymore, and the term itself no longer means a commitment to a specific belief. This is evident in the United States with reports of having 180,000,000 Christians. Jews have been conditioned against such terms as "church" and "Christian." The knee-jerk reaction is only postponed by changing terms. The meaning will still cause a reaction. But the change of terms is not done with deception in mind. Larry Rich pointed out that an incident that happened nine years ago is still causing them to be labeled as deceptive. Dan Juster left the congregation for his new post in Maryland, and so the congregation went a whole year without a pastor. A Russian mission was using the premises, and advertised a meeting without being clear about who was sponsoring it. Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein called the congregation on this, and accused them of being unethical. It was explained to him what the circumstances were. However, Rabbi Eckstein recently spoke to a church decrying "deceptive advertising by groups such as Adat Hatikvah three years ago." However, the group has been very careful since the incident nine years ago. The question was raised whether it is essential to identify ourselves every time we have interaction, professional or otherwise, with our Jewish people. At what point would it become deceptive? Several responded that it's not always necessary to identify ourselves immediately.

Eliezer Maass raised the question about someone accepting tuition and schooling from an organization, but then moving their own way after school is out. Would this be considered unethical? Erwin Kolb responded that, yes, this is unethical conduct. Moishe Rosen added that it has happened to JFJ about 30 times. It's necessary to hold an ethical balance. JFJ does not give scholarships, but gives a promisory loan to be "forgiven" when the student completes a prescribed work with the mission, or another approved group. He is reminded of what he has committed himself to do. The Army certainly requires a commitment, and no one

challenges the ethics of that. This is especially true if the Army has helped someone through school. JFJ does feel that they have been ripped off at times, but in each case, those individuals responsible have been confirmed in doing wrong in other areas.

Getting back to the issues of terminology, Erwin Kolb pointed out that people get suspicious when they don't see these newer terms being used in New Testament and early church history. Philip Bottomley pointed out that there's even a need in their own denomination to re-educate people as to what the term "Christian" really means. Paul Strube said he was amazed how easily Gentile Christians make statements about a Jewish believer's right to follow Jewish customs. It's important that they look at the text first. Arnold Fruchtenbaum pointed out that Jesus was never called "Christ," since this is an Anglicised form of the Greek word which, in turn, is a Greek translation of the Hebrew word for Messiah. Furthermore, the very term "Christian" is found in the New Testament only three times. So it was not a word commonly used, even then. In addition, it should be pointed out that they were speaking Hebrew and not English or Greek, and therefore they would have been calling themselves "Messianics" rather than "Christians," though technically, both words mean exactly the same thing. So returning to the mind set of first century Israel, these are appropriate words to use, even if most American Christians are no longer familiar with them. Moishe Rosen added that it's not simply a matter of what we call ourselves. There are some believers who are trying to create unnatural distinctions between Jews and Gentiles in Christ. But this should not be a movement where we are simply trying to distinguish ourselves from all others.

*LUNCH: 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

*SIXTH SESSION: 1:00-3:00 p.m.

BOOK REVIEW: WHAT CHRISTIANS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT JEWS AND JUDAISM by Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein and reviewed by Raymond Gannon